Teaching Medical Students On The Inpatient Units: A Multi-Faceted Curriculum Led By Psychiatry Trainees.

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Background

Psychiatry is a rapidly evolving field of medicine with an increasing need for competent educators who are able to provide medical education consistent with ADMSEP milestones[1]. On inpatient units, the psychiatry residents and fellows are often primary educators for medical students. The need to teach essential skills to these often inexperienced educators is lately highlighted[2] and the need for structured guidelines to improve the quality of medical student education by inexperienced educators has been requested by many years of psychiatry residents at the University of Minnesota. This project sought to address both questions - can a structured inpatient curriculum for medical students, as delivered by psychiatry residents and fellows, both improve medical student education as well as improve psychiatry trainees comfort with teaching?

This curriculum:
1. Standardizes delivery and improves the content of medical student education on inpatient psychiatric units
2. Improves quality of medical student education by applying didactic-based medical knowledge into practice of psychiatry on the inpatient psychiatric units
3. Supports the development of residents as competent psychiatry educators
4. Emphasizes the value of medical student education on the inpatient psychiatric units
5. Highlights the role of psychiatry trainees in undergraduate medical education.

Methods

Our curriculum guides psychiatry trainees on teaching medical students by providing an ADMSEP milestone-compatible schedule and a standardized module series. The curriculum is developed by members of a department-wide focus group and the content of modules coincide with content delivered in the clerkship didactic series - providing reinforcement in the clinical setting of material learned in a classroom discussion-based setting. Some topics include the psychiatric interview, the mental status exam, and other specific content areas. A post-curriculum questionnaire is sent to residents and medical students to assess the skills they gained through utilizing this curriculum.

Results

Pre-implementation Survey Results
1. 7 PGY1 and 3 PGY2 residents completed this survey.
2. They reported that on average they teach the medical student 2-4 hours/week.
3. In response to the question asking how comfortable these trainees feel about teaching, from 1 to 5, mostly they chose number 3, indicating not very comfortable, nor very comfortable.
4. Most of them were aware of the available teaching tools/resources.
5. 60% indicated that teaching is “very important” to them.
6. 30% indicated that they “will” pursue their career in academic psychiatry. 60% were indecisive.

Post-implementation Survey Results
1. During three rotations of piloting this curriculum, 5 PGY1 and 2 PGY2 residents, who were assigned to four inpatient units, participated in this project.
2. Participant residents reported that they taught the medical students on average about 1-6 hours/week which was not a significant change from pre-implementation time.
3. 70% reported that teaching is “very important” to them.
4. 6 out of 7 residents indicated that using this curriculum has increased their confidence in teaching medical students.
5. Their feedback while piloting this curriculum discussed the difficulty finding the right time to teach medical students while carrying patient care responsibilities and accommodating for student’s tight schedule. They also brought up the need for up to date, accurate and concise modules to use as a template while teaching medical students.

Medical student Survey Results
1. Five medical students (80% were third-year students) responded to our surveys during three months of implementing this project.
2. On average most of them had received 1-2 hours of teaching from psychiatry residents per week.
3. Most of them reported that the teaching that they had received from residents was at the level of their training.
4. 60% reported that the provided teaching materials were “somewhat redundant.” 40% reported that the teaching that they received from the residents was not redundant, considering the importance of the topics.
5. 100% reported that this teaching (from residents) improved their knowledge of psychiatry.
6. 100% of medical students reported that the teaching that they had received from residents was “very good” or “excellent” in quality.
7. 40% of the medical students reported that they are considering a career in psychiatry.

Conclusions

The psychiatry clerkship is for many students, their one opportunity to be exposed to crucial components of medical education - those aspects pertaining to the many facets of mental illness as taught by mental illness experts. On inpatient units, residents and fellows are often placed at the forefront of the medical student education. During the pilot phase of this project, our proposed inpatient psychiatric education curriculum has identified common obstacles that our residents face in teaching medical students and has reportedly increased participant residents’ confidence in teaching psychiatry related topics. After piloting this project, we are ready to move forward to expanding this project to a year-long implementation phase within our program. This curriculum will provide a standard template and guidance for psychiatry residents and fellows to deliver content to medical students, assist students in skill development, all while learning themselves education skills. As medical school curriculum is moving more toward experiential learning[3], so might experiential learning benefit from the structure of the curriculum.

References

2. "Teaching the teachers" in psychiatry Christopher A. Vassilias, Nicholas Brown, David Wall & Hester Womersley Advances in Psychiatric Treatment (2003), vol. 9, 308–315